Using LinkedIn as a People Finder: A How To Tip Sheet

- Create or update your profile using your resume. Don’t sweat the small stuff or worry about getting to “100% profile completeness” right away; only you can see your level of profile completeness. You can continue to work on your profile as you become more accustomed to using different aspects of the tool. See helpful, free training webinars at LinkedIn’s Help Center.

- Search for people you know already (friends, family, classmates, professors, co-workers, people from a professional organization you belong to or organization you volunteer with, etc.) and request to connect with them. To do so, use the search box at the top of the page and type in the name of the person you are looking for. Click “Connect” and personalize the message in the textbox to explain how you know the person and/or why you’d like to connect. If you are new to LinkedIn, you will build your list of connections (like ‘friends’ on Facebook) slowly, so don’t worry if you only have a handful to start.

- Again, in the search box top at the top of the page, type in the name of the group you are interested in. UWM groups include:
  --University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Alumni Association
  --UWM Panther Career Connections

- Once you have been approved to join a group in LinkedIn, you can go to the group page to post a discussion about the chapter, upcoming events, etc. To go to the group page, scroll your pointer over “Interests” on the left-hand side of the top toolbar and “Groups” will be on the dropdown menu.

- As a member of the group, you can search the other members by keyword, company, location, etc. On the top toolbar with the big search box, click on “Advanced” to the right of the search box. On the right side of the search box popup you can select the Group you want to search (my suggestion would be to begin with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Alumni Association group as it has the largest membership). Then you can search for the members that seem most interesting to you (i.e. job title, company, location, industry). Add in your search parameters and click “Search”. You can also search by using the Alumni Tool at www.linkedin.com/alumni.

- From the results page of your search, you can review individual’s profiles that seem interesting to you, and you can request to connect with an individual by clicking the square blue “Connect” button listed to the left of their name. (Sometimes you can request to connect from the person’s profile page, but on some occasions you have to go back to the search results page in order to make the request). On the connection request page, select that you know the person from your shared group connection and include a personal note in the textbox explaining how you found him or her and why you would like to connect.
  
  o For example: “Hi XX, I found your profile on the UWM Alumni Association LinkedIn group. I’m a UWM (grad or student) and would love the chance to learn more about your experience working at XYZ Company (or as an ABC). Would you be willing to connect with me? Thank you!”
o When the person connects with you, you will get notification on your LinkedIn account and emailed to you. Follow up with the person by sending an inbox message (click on the mail icon on the top toolbar; select ‘compose’). Send a message to thank the person for connecting with you on LinkedIn and explain why you are reaching out to him or her (ie. To learn about his or her experience working at XYZ; as a follow up from submitting an application; as a way to learn about a specific industry and get advice about working in that field, etc.). Inquire if he or she would be willing to chat with you over the phone or email and/or meet with you in person for an informational interview. Don’t forget to provide your contact information so you can be easily reached. See sample informational interview request below.

o REMEMBER, copy/paste is your friend. Save a template for the messages in a word document and cater as needed. Even if you don’t hear back from each of your requests, you are certain to find a few good leads from your outreach.

- As you begin to network with people, also remember to ask open-ended questions, such as: What advice would you be willing to share with me as a --fill in the blank-- (job seeker, applicant, person looking to enter the field/industry, etc.)? Open-ended questions give people the chance to help you in a way they feel most comfortable. Check out more info about informational interviews at http://www.quintcareers.com/information_interview.html or at http://www4.uwm.edu/cdc/documents/upload/informational_interview.pdf

Example LinkedIn Informational Interview Request

Hi ______,

Thank you so much for accepting my invitation to connect on LinkedIn. My name is ______, and I found your profile through the UWM Alumni Association Group. I am currently a student at UWM, studying ______. I’m reaching out to you based on your experience working as a _____ (OR, working at _____ Company). My educational background and experience is in ______, and I would love the opportunity to chat with you more about your career path. I am specifically interested in learning more about _____________ (optional – if you want to include a specific topic).

If there is a time that works for you in the upcoming weeks, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to call you or meet you in person to discuss your experiences, career path, and any advice you would be willing to share with me about working as a _____________ (OR working at ____________). I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time and hope to talk to you soon.

Sincerely,

Name
Phone
Email